Bruno Munari, an undisputed master of Italian design, has never believer in the artistic idea as a base on which to build design, just as on the other hand he has never been able to imagine design without an artistic idea. His creative and didactic endeavour as always been poised between system and invention, surveying complex methodologies that would embrace common sense as well as fantasy.

Perhaps the best way of approaching the work and thought of Munari is to read his books. They express his cultural positions with deep clarity and sophisticated simplicity, and not only through the written part: a book by Munari is at once a treatise and a design project; instructions for use and at the same time an example put into practice in accordance with those instructions. Naturally, with the skilled hand of Munari himself to follow the self-imposed guidelines with relaxed imagination.

In publishing here the brief essay written for us by Munari and followed up by a few salient excerpts from is books, we invited him also to contribute to the graphic design. The result, we feel, reproduces in miniature one of his extraordinary little volumes. And we hope it offers an essential and meaningful synthesis of his way of designing.

The extracts published after the essay by Bruno Munari, taken from books often not easily found, have been chosen by Enrico Morteo.
considered whatever type of design it happens to be. It must be considered, for example, that every objet to be designed has its optimal material which gives it its body, that every material has its right technology, that this technology gives certain forms and not others, that the aesthetic of that particular technology has to be discovered or invented, instead of thinking a priori about the «beautiful» objet or about the «new object at all costs». It is in this search for a technological aesthetic that creativity, not artistic fantasy, must be used. Fantasy has no limits and takes no account of how to realize the fantastic idea (technology can do everything, say the fanciful designers); whereas creativity demands a subtler inventiveness, since it that to be realized in the forms permitted by technology and materials. There must therefore be subtle harmonies of formal and material consistency, between the parts and the whole, as occurs in nature, where the grasshopper is different from the snail but both are consistent in their function and formal appearance.

No precise method, therefore, exists which is equal for all designers. Instead there exists a design structure with a logical basis. To this will be added all those subjective values necessary to attain a good product in which all components – material, technological, economic, functional and aesthetic – have been considered at the same level. Styling, on the other hand, is another sector of design, where the fashion aspect is predominant and goods are produced for rapid consumption: USA and jet.